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SUBJECT: JAPANESE GOVERNMENT SEEKS U.S. HELP IN CALMING
DOWN TAIWANESE

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Japan is working hard to mitigate increased tension with Taiwan following a June 10 fishing boat collision between a Taiwan fishing boat and a Japanese coast guard ship, but the Senkaku Islands indisputably belong to Japan, MOFA told Embassy Tokyo. Even though the Japan Coast Guard vessel accidentally sank the Taiwanese boat, both sides were responsible for the mishap, our MOFA interlocutor explained. Japan has apologized and is negotiating with Taiwan to resolve the incident; but MOFA still holds that the Taiwanese are to blame for escalating the matter. MOFA passed a request that the United States urge Taiwan to "calm down" to avoid heightening tension and worsening public sentiment over the incident. Our MOFA contact also requested that the United States publicly state that the Senkaku Islands belong to Japan as indicated in the U.S.-Japan Okinawa Reversion Treaty of 1972. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On June 10, a Japan Coast Guard vessel and a Taiwanese fishing boat collided near the disputed Senkaku Islands. Although no one was hurt, the Taiwanese fishing boat sank. Japan has conducted an investigation into the collision and concluded that both sides were responsible, MOFA China and Mongolia Division Principal Deputy Director Endo told Embassy Tokyo June 16. Japan has expressed sincere regret over the accident, is continuing to negotiate with the Taiwan authorities to resolve the situation, and is committed to responding in a calm manner. The Taiwanese, however, have escalated tension over the incident and the "Taiwan authorities have lost control over their public," Endo said. On June 16, nine vessels from the Taiwan coast guard accompanied a Taiwanese commercial fishing boat into the waters near the Senkaku Islands. This was an intrusion of Japanese territorial waters, he explained. Japan "cannot accept this intrusion but at the same time cannot respond with force," Endo said.

¶3. (C) Endo argued that in light of historical fact and based on international law, the Senkaku Islands are inherently Japanese territory. Hence, there is no territorial dispute to resolve. Furthermore, the U.S.-Japan Okinawa Reversion Treaty of 1972 notes that the islands belong to Japan, and Japan requests that the United States publicly state that this is the case. Particularly when speaking with the press, it is important for the United States to avoid suggesting there is a dispute over the islands. "It will place Japan in a very difficult position if the United States avoids publicly taking a position on this issue," Endo added. Japan requests that the United States show strong support for Japan's position, he said.

¶4. (C) Japan is committed to dealing calmly with this matter, Endo continued. Japan hopes that the United States will urge Taiwan to react in a measured way and to refrain from increasing tension over the issue. The United States and Japan are responsible partners in maintaining peace and stability in Asia, and Japan is committed to continuing this partnership, he emphasized.

SCHIEFFER